

The Cincinnati Art Museum Bulletin

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INTRODUCTION

SCHOLARLY specialists of many kinds have been unfailingly generous to the Museum as the various departments of its collections have grown. And the Museum is further honored to present in this issue of its *Bulletin* two articles by experts in the art and archaeology of the Near East, Dr. Phyllis Ackerman, who has been Professor of Cultural History at the Asia Institute and co-editor of the *Survey of Persian Art*, and Dr. Helene Kantor of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

PHILIP R. ADAMS

5. Ceremonial Cauldron, with Deity Flanked by Winged Antelope,
Luristan, Persia, bronze, 1200-800 B.C., h. 12 $\frac{1}{8}$ ", w. 5 $\frac{1}{16}$ " (30.8 x 14.76 cm.).
Accessions number 1957.225.



A Luristan Illustration of a Sunrise Ceremony

SMALL bronzes of a hitherto unknown style began to appear from Persia on the Paris market in 1928 – striking, vigorous, decorative in character and provocative in form. Among both scholars and connoisseurs they caused, quite literally, a sensation. One type showed pairs of three-dimensional upstanding confronted animals, mostly ibexes, mounted on a circlet (figure 1). Another, far more puzzling, was cut-out low-relief plaques (figure 2), unfinished on the back save for two to four projecting rounded points, each a single pacing animal (or, rarely, human figure), always with a round hole near the center. The latter were sometimes in pairs, but facing in opposite directions, and the problem became the more obscure when complete pieces appeared, with the paired plaques sliding loose on a heavy square bar, the ends flattened and scrolled in opposite directions. A Louvre official suggested a head-rest for the dead!

Within a few months it was known that the material had come from Luristan – an almost isolated province in the mountains on the western edge of the Iranian plateau, with a backward and rather unruly pastoral tribal population. The first piece had been found accidentally by a native looking for water, but when the Lurs discovered that they could get for these things, not only the famous bread of nearby Kermanshah, but even hard money (the first piece brought one toman, then worth about one dollar!), they organized into groups for systematic searching, and about 2,000 pieces (counting trivia) subsequently filtered into the market.

Among these were solid-cast bottle-shaped objects which could not be vases because they were not hollow but had only a small hole through them, and long pins with large disk tops which could not be garment pins because the heads were too heavy. Besides, many true garment pins had been found, with normal small heads: fancy knobs or little animals, such as charming swimming ducks. Then there came to light one complex, fixed together by corrosion: the paired animals (as in figure 1) stood on the bottle-shaped vase and a big disk-headed pin ran down through the two, the whole making a cultic object that might have been held by a priest or worshipper. The plaques on a bar proved to be bits for horses ridden by armed men.

Most of these bronzes were solid cast, but a few were repoussé – notably a large belt-band showing a hunting scene, now in the Louvre; and especially a series of situlae bearing designs with very Assyrian-looking Kings and other figures. More than a dozen inscribed pieces confirmed Assyrian relations with this area over a long period, and

1. (*opposite*). Talisman with Confronted Ibexes, Luristan, Persia, bronze, 1000-800 B.C., h. 4 1/4", w. 3 1/4" (10.8 x 8.26 cm.), reproduced: Pope, *Masterpieces of Persian Art*, New York, 1945, pl. 7, below. Accessions number 1954.499.

also established a dating for the bulk of the material, between about 1000 and 800 or 700 B.C. Further study showed that the area had been a great horse-breeding center, providing remounts for the Assyrian army, and also probably the horses which were shipped in quantities from Tyre, in boats especially designed for the purpose. Later, Alexander the Great, on his way to India, tarried here for more than a fortnight to get cavalry replacements.

Ten years after the first, native finds, the Iranian (later Asia) Institute of New York sent two expeditions into the region and found a temple and a small stone sanctuary. The latter revealed another use for the long, disk-headed pins: they were stuck into the walls between the stones, evidently as votive offerings. While in the first find cast bronzes had predominated and repoussé had been relatively rare, at this site – on Surkh Dum mountain above Kuh-i-Dasht plain – the reverse was true; the repoussé technique predominated and was developed with great skill.

Shortly after this, quantities of these repoussé bronzes – called either "Kuh-i-Dasht" or "Surkh Dum" – came on to the market, revealing a wealth of illustrations of divinities worshipped there and their attributes. Among these the most notable is a side of a quiver, in the Metropolitan Museum, with varying groups of gods or animals in each of a half-dozen zones.

Then, a dozen years later, appeared the masterpiece of this type: a silver plaque (figure 4) – the only piece of silver yet recorded from this culture – bearing in low repoussé and engraving a myth illustration. Because of its Assyrian relations, and, through these, its connections with a long tradition of Near Eastern religious thought, we can "read" the myth shown thereon.

It is the Birth of the Twins, who have long since been recognized as representatives of the constellation, the Gemini – Castor and Pollux in the Classic myths most familiar to us, the Asvins in India, but called by many other names by various Near Eastern peoples. For some of these, e.g. the Canaanites, this constellation served as the Morning, and Evening Star, so that the Twins might be named "Dawn" and "Sunset".

The father of the Twins, in a mythology that came down from the Sumerians and lasted throughout this region for some three millennia, was El, the Great God ("El" simply means "god" as such, or "power"), also called "Ea", "Water" and connected with rain. As rain-god he was associated, for calendrical reasons, with the constellation that we still call "Water-man", "Aquarius" (but all this had nothing to do with the late, solar-zodiacal astrology); and since Aquarius is in our southern sky, the god was also called "En-ki", "Lord of the Below" – as we say "*down south*."

As storm and rain-god he was likewise a fertility god, and as such was sometimes known as Lord of the Palm – "Ba'al Tamar", for the palm was the source of the all-important crop, dates. Because a fertility god must be virile and strong, he was in some rites addressed as "The Bull". In Assyrian illustrations he appears embodied in a mountain, perhaps because the mountain is a "source" of rain – rain-clouds gather about a mountain peak and the contact often results in precipitation. His Greek equivalent, the storm-god Zeus, had as his chief emblem the eagle.

El-Ea-Enki's most intimate attribute was a goat (or ibex), correlative with the constellation adjacent to Aquarius, Capricornus and emblematic of the God's virility; this very likely explains the large number of caprid motifs (figure 1) in both Luristan finds.

Most of this, together with attendant priests or worshippers is presented on the silver plaque, together with some novel details. The Father-god, in the center, has bull-eyes and ears, as have the Twins and all the attendants. The human-faced bull of the Cincinnati bit-plaque (figure 2) is very likely again El, as The Bull, and wearing eagle-wings. On the plaque the Great God's eagle-wings form a mountain body. Palms alternate in the upper border with pomegranates, which completely fill the lower border – a multiple-seeded fruit repeatedly used as a symbol of virility and fertility. The Twins and the attendants in two groups hold palm-leaves (we are reminded of Palm Sunday), and the theme recurs as palmettes below the bearded Elders on the God's left.



2. Bit-Plaque with Primeval Bull, Luristan, Persia, bronze, 1000-800 B.C., h. 5 1/2", w. 5 1/2" (13.97 x 13.97 cm.), reproduced: A.U. Pope, editor, *A Survey of Persian Art*, London and New York, 1938, Volume IV, pl. 33A; Pope, *Masterpieces of Persian Art*, New York, 1945, pl. II, below. Accessions number 1954.496.

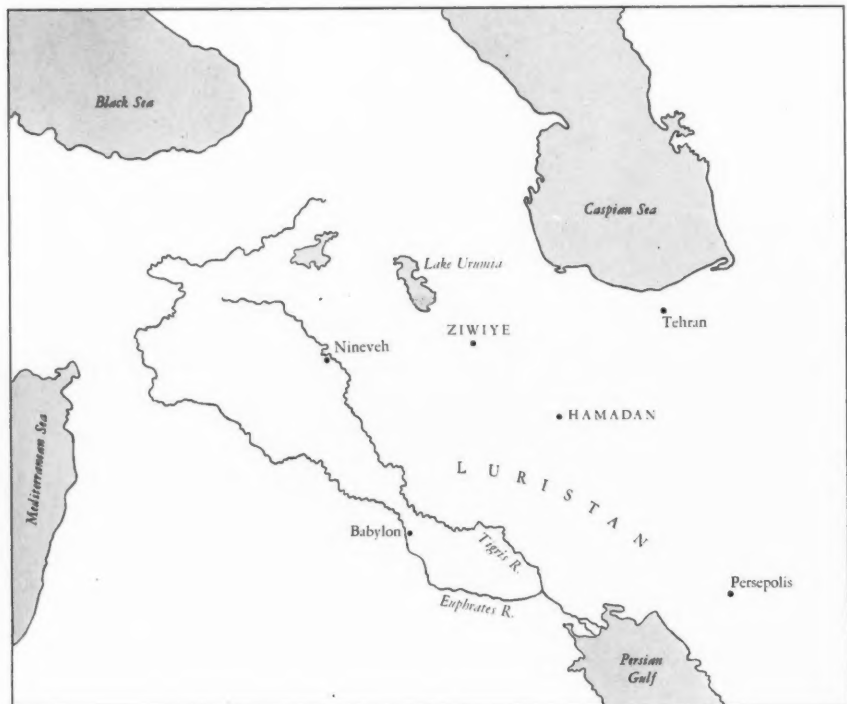
The Twins are emerging from eggs; but even so out of eggs are the Greek Twins, Castor and Pollux, born on some Greek monuments. The peculiar variant here is that the eggs emerge from, or are balanced on El's shoulders, fitting in the curve of his head and beard.

The sun is displayed on El's mountain body, and a star is low above the "horizon" on his right. This is, apparently, a sunrise ceremony – obviously relevant to the *birth* of the Gemini, of whom one was Morning Star.

The attendants, all richly dressed, with great variety of costume detail, seem to represent Three Ages of Man. Boys, making a gesture of salutation, crouch, the palm-leaves concealing legs and feet, as if they, too, were just emerging from eggs. The leader of a procession of full-grown men above is handing his palm to one twin. The bearded Elders on the opposite side stand firmly affronted, one hand, fist-clasped, raised to the level of the head, as if affirming an oath, and repeating the gesture of the Twins.

What was this plaque? That is anybody's guess; but it would have served fittingly as a pectoral on the robe of the High Priest when he celebrated the dawn ceremony for the heliacal rising of the Gemini, invoking the power of God for the blessing of fertility.

PHYLLIS ACKERMAN



3. Talisman with the Many-Formed
Great God, Luristan, Persia, bronze,
1000-800 B.C., h. $7\frac{1}{4}$ " , w. $2\frac{1}{8}$ "
(18.42 x 7.3 cm.), reproduced: Pope,
Masterpieces of Persian Art, New York,
1945, pl. 6, upper left.
Accessions number 1954.497.



4. Breast Plaque or Belt Appliqué,
Luristan, Persia, silver, 1200-900 B.C.,
h. $4\frac{3}{8}$ " , w. $10\frac{1}{8}$ " (11.75 x 25.72
cm.), reproduced: Ackerman, "The
Gemini are Born", *Archaeology*,
Volume 8, Number 1, Spring 1955,
pl. 1, p. 27.
Accessions number 1957.29.





Goldwork and Ornaments from Iran

IN recent years the Cincinnati Art Museum has been building up an outstanding collection of ancient oriental art. A prominent place in it is taken by a series of objects from Persia or, as its inhabitants now prefer to call it, Iran. From Ziwiye, southeast of Lake Urumia in the modern province of Kurdistan, come three golden appliqué adorned with figures and pierced with holes for attachment, a decorated silver plaque, and some personal jewelry. Reputed to have been found in the ancient city mound in the center of modern Hamadan are a magnificent gold cup and armlet, and two gold lion heads that were originally part of a second armlet. These pieces, datable to the earlier part of the first millennium B.C., represent important aspects of Iranian art, an art whose history has been as chequered as the geographical configuration and political development of the country.

Iran is a mountainous plateau having on one side the Tigris-Euphrates valley and on others Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. It is a land of great contrasts: a desert plateau of frigid winters and torrid summers in the center, hills with luxuriant semi-tropical vegetation on the borders of the Caspian, secluded mountain valleys in the Zagros and Elburz ranges, and alluvial plains at the southwest corner adjacent to Iraq. From very early times the country has been a great artery of communication, linking western Asia, India, and the steppes of central Asia. It has sheltered many different peoples speaking many different tongues.

Iranian art, equally diverse, did not follow a single line of development. Many of its ramifications are still unknown and its consecutive development is not yet so well defined as that of art in Egypt or Mesopotamia. Gradually, however, the main lines of the story are becoming clearer as new discoveries fill more of the gaps in our knowledge.

Two factors of particular significance in molding the development of Iranian art stand out. The first is an inclination toward decorative, even semi-abstract treatment of the subject matter; symmetry, grace, balanced geometricized forms interest the artist more than the rendering of natural detail or the telling of a story. Beginning with the painted pottery of prehistoric villagers in the fourth millennium B.C., this tendency recurs down to Achaemenid Persian times in the middle of the first millennium B.C., and even later. The second factor is the perennial influence of Mesopotamia. Throughout early Iranian history the connections with the plain to the southwest affected not only Iran's political fortunes but its cultural forms as well. As soon as the first histori-

1. (*opposite*). Gold Appliqué with Repoussé Decoration, Ziwiye, Persia, VIII-VII century B.C., h. 4 $\frac{3}{16}$ " , w. 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (10.95 x 7.94 cm.), accessions number 1953.64.

Parallels: lion and lancer - Godard, *Le trésor de Ziwiye*, p. 93, Fig. 81 (ivory plaque); palmette - Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume XIII (1955), p. 216 (gold plaque).

cal culture of Mesopotamia, that of the Sumerians, had crystallized about 3400 B.C., it influenced nearby areas of Iran. At intervals in the succeeding millennia Mesopotamian influence can be discerned. In art its effect was often that of introducing representational motives or furthering the development of narrative or naturalistic work. The presence and interplay of these two factors is evident in the objects selected as representatives of Iranian art for the Cincinnati Art Museum.

The objects from Ziwiye are part of a treasure that is one of the most fantastic archaeological finds made in recent times and has revealed a whole new aspect of Iranian art. The treasure was found in 1947 and one version of the circumstances of its discovery has it that in the spring some women of that remote mountain village needed fresh earth with which to repave the floors of their houses. When they dug into the slope of the nearby mound formed by the debris of an ancient settlement, they came upon a bronze sarcophagus in the shape and size of a bathtub; it was crammed with objects of precious metal and ivory. Although the women hastily concealed their find and their men-folk furtively carried it into their houses at night, its existence could not be kept secret. There was a turmoil of excitement while all the villagers demanded a share of the spoil. Gold ornaments, their value as ancient works of art unrecognized, were cut up into divisible pieces and many were even melted down. Whether or not this is an exact account of the clandestine digging at Ziwiye, it is certain that only gradually did the find become known to the outside world.

The Ziwiye treasure can be dated in two ways, stylistically by comparison with Late Assyrian art and historically by information in Assyrian inscriptions. By the first millennium B.C., Assyria in the northern Tigris-Euphrates valley had become the focus of Mesopotamian civilization. The country was without natural defensive borders and the annals of her kings record the unending campaigns necessary to restrain neighboring mountaineers and desert tribes, and to control communication routes to the Mediterranean coast. Iran was in a very restless state, for Indo-Iranian tribes were penetrating the country and establishing themselves there. They as well as other peoples of Iran were always prepared to encroach on Assyrian territory. Sargon in 716 B.C., and Ashurbanipal (668-630 B.C.) in one of his early campaigns, fighting in the area of Mannai, southeast of Lake Urumia, sacked mountain citadels, including Izibie which is usually identified with modern Ziwiye. No scientific excavations have been made in this region, aside from recent tests at Ziwiye itself, so that the culture of the area is almost unknown except for the evidence of the treasure. It, however, shows the strength of Assyrian influence.

2. (*upper right*). Gold Appliqué with Repoussé Decoration, Ziwiye, Persia, VIII-VII century B.C., h. 2 3/8", w. 6 1/2" (6.67 x 16.51 cm.), accessions number 1953.65.

Parallels: hunters and lions - Godard, *op. cit.*, pp. 81 ff., Figs. 81, 82, 85 (ivory plaques); oval shape of appliqué - *ibid.*, p. 98, Fig. 86 (ivory plaque).

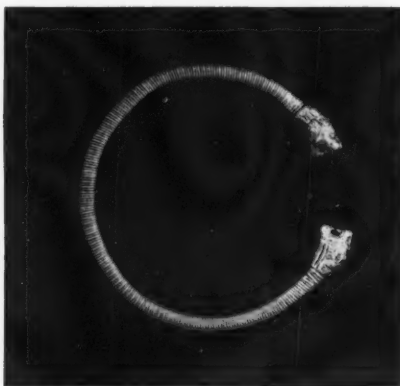
3. (*lower right*). Gold Appliqué with Repoussé Decoration, Ziwiye, Persia, VIII-VII century B.C., h. 6", w. 5 1/8" (15.24 x 13.02 cm.), accessions number 1953.67.

Parallels: Godard, *op. cit.*, p. 35, Fig. 25 and *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Volume XIII (1955), p. 217 (gold plaques).





4. Necklace of Gold and Stone Beads, Ziwiye, Persia, VIII-VII century
 n.c., L. 19" (48.26 cm.), accessions number 1953.66. Parallel: *Syria*, Volume XVIII
 (1937), Pl. XV, 2 (spiral gold wire beads from Late Assyrian grave at Mari).



Assyria was not only an empire-building state; she was also the receptory and apostle of age-old Mesopotamian civilization. The monotonous accounts of yearly punitive campaigns are only one side of the story; on the other we have the evidence of intensive cultural exchanges. At times Mannai was an Assyrian border province and it was flooded with Assyrian culture. A number of the carved ivory inlays belonging to the Ziwiye treasure seem to be actual imports from Assyria and most of the metalwork from the find is Assyrian in inspiration. On two of the Cincinnati plaques (figures 1, 2) ferocious lions are fought by warriors in Assyrian costume, their shields tiny in contrast to the gaping jaws and smiting paws of the beasts. Such direct combat with lions is known in Assyria on cylinder seals, an ivory, and reliefs of Ashurbanipal. The theme, the poses, and many of the details of the rendering are purely Assyrian. In fact, the groups of combatants on the gold plaques are so close to those on some of the Ziwiye ivories as to seem copied, by a somewhat provincial hand, from them. The appliquéés show how in the wake of Assyrian conquest Assyrian representational art spread into Iran. In these works the main interest was in showing the motive, and formal considerations such as balance and symmetry play no marked role.

Of somewhat different character, though still typically Assyrian, is the decoration of the largest plaque (figure 3), which when complete was a trapezoidal appliqué with four or five registers. The subject matter has a certain religious connotation; the "sacred tree" standing for the fertility of the plant world on which all animals ultimately depend is flanked by various attendant monsters. The symmetrical arrangement is natural here. The inorganic plants consist of a palmette crown supported by ribbon-like stems, some tipped by a lotus bud, a palmette umbel, or a pomegranate. Like the palmettes on one lion-hunt plaque (figure 1), these plants are Assyrian in shape, although their origins can be traced back to much earlier decorative plant motives that originally flourished in Egypt and Syria. The monsters, too, are all types known in Assyrian art, and some, such as the winged bull, are very Assyrian in rendering. But there also occur details not usual for Assyria: the griffin and large female sphinxes have kilts pendent from their chests, a feature normal for the sphinxes of Phoenician art in the west, and tails tipped with bird heads, as do some sphinxes of Late Hittite reliefs. Un-Assyrian, too, is the playful alteration of details of the animals, the lion's tongue transmuted to a twig, the tail of one monster in the top register into a flower-like form. Though the inspiration for the plaque's decoration derives from Assyrian decorative work, such as, for example, embroidered designs represented in reliefs on the robes of Ashurnasirpal, the motives are here rendered with an emphatic insistence on the multiplicity of the hybrid beings and the decorative detail on them.

5. (*opposite*). Gold Bracelet with Lion Head Terminals, Ziwiye, Persia, VIII-VII century B.C., Dia. 3" (7.62 cm.), accessions number 1953.68. Parallels: P. E. Botta and M. E. Flandin, *Monuments de Ninive*, Paris, 1849, Volume I, Pl. 13 and Volume II, Pl. 161, (lion-headed armlet worn by Sargon represented in a relief at Khorsabad); *University Museum Bulletin*, Volume XXI (1957), p. 37, Fig. 28 (gold animal-headed bracelet from Ziwiye).

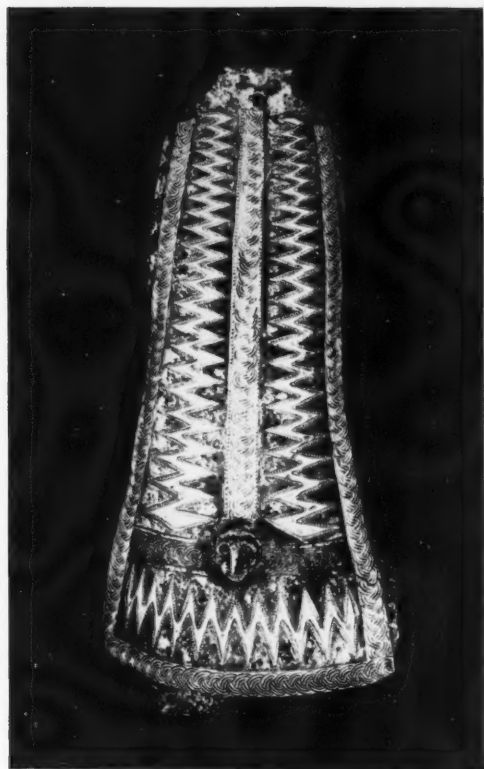
The personal ornaments, a necklace with coiled gold wire beads (figure 4) and a bracelet terminating in lion heads (figure 5), are types normal to Assyria. However, the bracelet or armlet with animal head finials was a type also widely copied elsewhere, as in bronzes found in Luristan, the province to the southeast of Kurdistan. The shape of the lion heads of the Cincinnati bracelet indicates that it was locally made, not an Assyrian import.

Very different from the Assyrianizing gold appliqués and jewelry is the curved silver plaque (figure 6) that may have been an ornament for a horse's head. Here the geometric design of interlace and zigzags has no Assyrian affinities. Analogy for the only representational element, the projecting lion's head, could be sought in the lion-head bosses of Assyrian shields, but far closer are the bosses of some large ornamental pins found in Luristan which are contemporary with the Late Assyrian period. The silver plaque can be taken as a representative of a provincial style of Iranian art.

The ornaments from Ziwiye give us a glimpse into the complexity of artistic development in southwestern Iran during the VIII and VII centuries B.C., of the influx of Assyrian imagery, the results being frequently very close in form to their prototypes yet at the same time betraying influences from the arts of western craftsmen in Phoenicia and Syria. Alongside the pieces showing distinct Assyrian influence however, there is another piece attributable to a local school of applied art, one of several such traditions that must have developed in Iran, although the only one as yet well-known is that of Luristan, represented by several objects in the Cincinnati Art Museum.

Among the originally nomadic peoples from central Asia two were of particular importance in early Iranian history, the closely related Medes and Persians. The Medes, settled in western Iran, established during the VII century B.C., a kingdom with its capital at Ecbatana, modern Hamadan. Something of Median history is known from Assyrian inscriptions and Greek historians. In 612 B.C., the Assyrian empire finally crumbled before the combined assault of Medes and Babylonians, and for some fifty years thereafter the Medes ruled Iran. Then in 553 B.C., their cousins, the Persians led by Cyrus, descendent of Achaemenes, seized power and founded an empire which extended over most of the civilized parts of the ancient world.

The Achaemenid Persians were the cultural as well as the political heirs of the ancient Near East. To build and adorn their palaces at Susa and Persepolis they brought craftsmen not only from Babylonia and Egypt, but also Ionian Greeks from the western coast of Anatolia. It has seemed an enigma how a dynasty, seemingly without an artistic tradition of its own, could on its sudden accession to power produce with almost equal suddenness a coherent artistic style. The art which is typified by the royal buildings at Persepolis and whose range is becoming better known through recent discoveries, among them some of the objects now in Cincinnati, was no mere medley of foreign styles, but had its own individuality. The primary basis of its iconography is Mesopotamian, derived from Assyrian prototypes, a striking example of Mesopotamian influence on Iranian art. Equally striking, though, is the resurgence of the decorative orientation, reminiscent of that which had been characteristic for the work of prehis-



6. Silver Plaque with Incised and Applied Gold Decoration, Ziwiye, Persia, VIII-VII century B.C., h. 8", w. 3 7/8" (bottom) (20.32 x 9.84 cm.), accessions number 1953.69. Parallel: Godard, *Le trésor de Ziwiye*, p. 115, Fig. 100 (plaque of the same form and decoration).

toric pot painters millennia earlier, which molds the Achaemenid style. The Assyrians covered their palace walls with narrative scenes, but the architectural relief of the Persians is for the most part a decorative tapestry of figures beautifully rendered and balanced. Major and minor art, colossal column capitals and small pieces of jewelry, all have the same elegance of composition and execution, the same graceful stylization of natural details.

No more exquisite representatives of the court style of the Achaemenid Persians can be found than the two gold lion heads of the Cincinnati Art Museum (figures 7, 8). The wrinkled muzzles and noses of the snarling beasts are stylized as gracefully rounded ridges and lobes, the edge of the gaping jaws as a sweeping curve. But decorative stylization was compatible with sensitivity to natural details, as witnessed by the wonderfully lolling tongues and the roofs of the mouths, ridged with a minuteness of

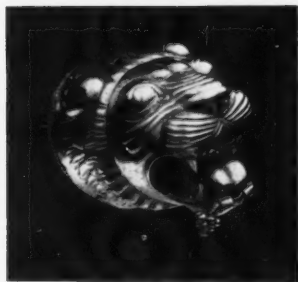


7, 8. (*above and opposite*). Gold Lion Heads with Clasp from an Armlet, Hamadan (?) Achaemenid Persia, VI-IV century B.C., L. 1 3/8", H. 1 1/4" (4.2 x 3.2 cm.), accessions number 1957.31a, b. Parallels: *Illustrated London News*, July 21, 1956, p. 107 and *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New series, Volume XIII (1955), pp. 220-222 (lion heads of gold rhyta and daggers in the Teheran and Metropolitan museums); M. T. Mustafavi, *The Historical Monuments of Hamadan* (in Persian), Teheran, 1953, p. 130, Fig. 47 (separate gold lion head).

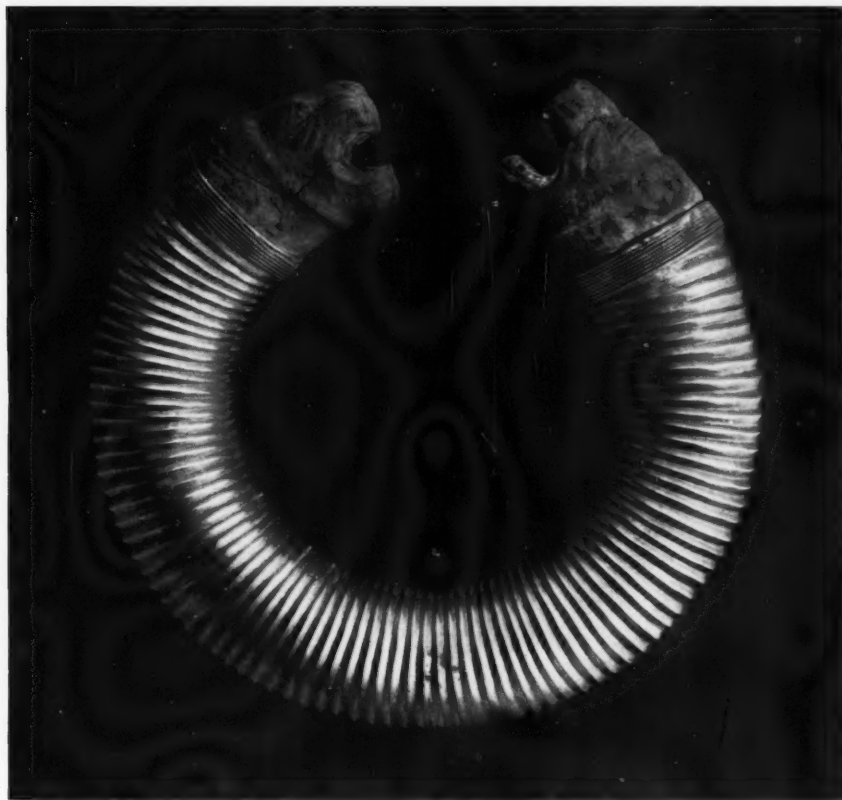
workmanship that testifies to the technical virtuosity of Achaemenid goldsmiths.

The original setting of the two gold heads is shown by a complete armlet, a thick, ridged gold ring encircled by finely twisted gold wire at the ends and tipped with lion heads of lapis lazuli paste, originally bright blue (figure 9). Although much abraded, they have many of the same details so clear on the gold heads. Ornaments such as these were not worn only by women. Persian noblemen and warriors were customarily so adorned with precious jewelry as to arouse the amazement of the Greeks, as we know from the descriptions of Herodotus and Xenophon.

An even more complex object is the magnificent gold cup (figures 10, 11). While in the jewelry just described decorative stylization of individual details was the dominant feature, in the cup it is the decorative arrangement of motives. They are tectonically placed, flutes and lobes on the body, symmetrically arranged lions on the shoulder, a palmette frieze on the neck, and ibex-shaped handles. The latter have prototypes in the animal-shaped handles used by Assyrians and before them by Egyptians. Usually, however, the animal either faces inwards as if to drink from the contents of the vessel, or turns its head back as if surprised at the brink. Here we have a unique combination, both poses at once. Though the result is biologically monstrous, it is seen as a pleasingly symmetrical arrangement of heads when the cup is regarded *en face*, and as one turns the vessel as an ever varying, lively grouping of heads, curving backwards and



9. (below). Gold Armlet with Lapis-Lazuli Paste Lion Heads, Hamadan (?) Achaemenid Persia, VI-IV century B.C., Dia. $4\frac{3}{4}$ " (12.07 cm.), accessions number 1957.30. Parallels: A. U. Pope, editor, *A Survey of Persian Art* (London and New York, 1938), Volume IV, Pl. 122, H (silver armlet with goat heads); E. E. Herzfeld, *Iran in the ancient East*, London and New York, 1941, Pl. LXXIX and E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis*, Volume I, Chicago 1953, Pl. 37 (Scythian bringing animal-headed armlet in relief in the Apadana at Persepolis).



forwards, with another head peering over from the opposite side. Here, indeed, the decorative spirit is in full sway.

The cup is executed in a highly polished, sharply delineated technique that we have come to expect in Achaemenid work, but it does not coincide in all of its details with the normal court style. For example, on the lions of the shoulder the two side lobes of the cheeks are not very clearly present and the mane is vertically hatched; the ibex bodies are covered with very artificial lobes and ridges unparalleled on normal Achaemenid ibex handles in which there is more feeling for the natural body of the animals. Thus the question arises whether this cup shows a new aspect of the Achaemenid court style or whether it could possibly be a representative of the art of the Median kingdom. The cup is said to have been found at Hamadan, and that city had been the Median capital before it became a summer residence of the Achaemenids. The question may be asked, but cannot yet be answered. Of Median art, as distinct from Achaemenid, we yet know nothing with certainty. No indisputable examples of it have been discovered with which the Cincinnati cup can be compared. But we do know that the Median kingdom arose in the VII century in conflict with Assyrians, Scythians, and Persians, and had close connections with the neighboring region of Mannai, which seems to have alternated between Median and Assyrian control. The Medes must have been familiar with and influenced by Assyrianizing objects such as those from Ziwiye. That they themselves possessed treasure we may be assured by a reference to the silver and gold sacked by Cyrus in Ecbatana given in the chronicle of the Late Babylonian king Nabonidus. On the Cincinnati cup some of the details of the lions and of the palmette frieze are reminiscent of features of Ziwiye goldwork. Whether it is a Median





10, 11. Gold Cup, Hamadan (?), Median or Achaemenid Persia, VI-V century
 Parallels: animal handles on jars: Pope, *op. cit.*, Pl. 117, A (silver jar
 from Duvanli, Bulgaria); E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis*, Volume II, Chicago 1957,
 Pl. 70 D, F (jars represented in reliefs in the Apadana at Persepolis).

piece dating to the earlier part of the VI century B.C., or an Achaemenid work, its perfection as an outstanding creation of the Iranian spirit is evident.

The collection of metalwork from Iran in the Cincinnati Art Museum is splendid for the immediate attractiveness of the individual objects. However, when they are considered against the political and cultural settings in which they were made, as representatives of the complex development of Iranian art in the first millennium B.C., their intrinsic characteristics and significance can be even better appreciated.

HELENE J. KANTOR

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